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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

METHOD OF RECONCILIATION;

A N D

FULLNESS OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE.

THE METHOD
OF
MAN'S RECONCILIATION WITH GOD;
AND THE
FULLNESS OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE:

Two Sermons,

PREACHED BEFORE THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, MAY 14, 1856.

BY

REV. JOHN HANNAH, D. D.,

AND

REV. FREDERICK JAMES JOBSON, A. M.

EDITED BY REV. D. W. CLARK, D. D.



CINCINNATI:

PUBLISHED BY L. SWORMSTEDT & A. POE,
FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, AT THE WESTERN BOOK
CONCERN, CORNER OF MAIN AND EIGHTH STREETS.

R. P. THOMPSON, PRINTER.

1857.

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TO THE REVEREND
THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
AND THE
DELEGATES OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE, 1856,
THE
FOLLOWING DISCOURSES,
PREACHED IN THEIR PRESENCE, AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
Inscribed.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following sermons possess an intrinsic value. Not only are they rich in evangelical truth, but they must ever be regarded as fine specimens of exegetical and practical sermonizing. This interest is heightened by the authorship, and by the occasion on which they were delivered.

A marked feature of the General conference of 1856, held at Indianapolis, Indiana, was the presence of the honored delegation of the British Wesleyan Connection—Rev. John Hannah, D. D., and Rev. Frederick J. Jobson, A. M. On the second day of the session they were introduced to the conference by Rev. Bishop Waugh in an appropriate address. The address of the British Wesleyan conference was then

presented by Dr. Hannah, and afterward eloquent and highly-instructive addresses were delivered—much to the satisfaction of the conference—by himself and Mr. Jobson.

May 5th, the following resolution, introduced by Rev. Dr. Kennaday, of the New York East conference, was adopted:

Resolved, That Rev. Dr. Hannah and the Rev. Mr. Jobson, the representatives in this body of our beloved brethren of the Wesleyan conference in Great Britain, be respectfully and affectionately requested to preach before the conference at such periods as they may respectively designate, on consultation with the bishops.

May 8th, Bishop Waugh announced that, in pursuance of the foregoing resolution, the representatives of the Wesleyan Connection in Great Britain, on consultation with the bishops, had designated Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock, as the time for a sermon from Dr. Hannah before the conference, and Wednesday evening at half-past seven o'clock, as the hour when Rev. Mr. Jobson would preach before the con-

ference—the services on both these occasions to be in Wesley Chapel.

May 14th, on motion of Rev. H. Bangs, of the New York East conference, the following resolution was adopted, namely:

Resolved, That when we adjourn, we adjourn to meet in Wesley Chapel this afternoon at half-past two o'clock, to hear a sermon from the Rev. Dr. Hannah, the representative of the Wesleyan conference in Great Britain.

Pursuant to adjournment the conference met in Wesley Chapel, Bishop Scott in the chair. The accompanying discourse, on “The Method of Man’s Reconciliation with God,” was then delivered by Dr. Hannah, to a large and deeply-interested congregation. At the conclusion of the religious services, on motion of Rev. John A. Collins, of the Baltimore conference, seconded by Rev. Dr. George Peck, of the Wyoming conference, the following resolution was adopted unanimously by a rising vote, namely:

Resolved, by the delegates of the several annual conferences in General conference assembled, That we hereby

tender our cordial thanks to Rev. Dr. Hannah for his truly-evangelical and able discourse, delivered before this body, and that we respectfully request a copy for publication, to be included in the catalogue of books published by authority of the General conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The conference then adjourned to meet in the evening to hear a sermon from the Rev. Mr. Jobson. At the appointed hour the house was densely crowded in every part. Bishop Simpson took the chair, and after the preliminary exercises, Mr. Jobson preached with great pathos and power on "The Fullness of Christian Privilege." After which, on motion of Rev. Dr. D. W. Clark, of the New York conference, seconded by Rev. Henry Slicer, of the Baltimore conference, the following resolution was unanimously adopted by a rising vote, namely:

Resolved, by the delegates of the several annual conferences in General conference assembled, That we tender to the Rev. Mr. Jobson our cordial thanks for his eloquent and able sermon, and that we respectfully request a copy for publication.

In compliance with the request of the General conference so earnestly made, the honored authors have forwarded, as early as their convenience would admit, the manuscript copies of their respective discourses to the editor of the Western Book Concern, who is now gratified at being able to present them to the public in their present form.

WESTERN BOOK CONCERN,
Cincinnati, February 25, 1857.

THE METHOD
OF
MAN'S RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

BY

REV. JOHN HANNAH, D. D.

S E R M O N .

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 CORINTHIANS V, 21.

RECONCILIATION, and the ministry of reconciliation, are placed before us in this chapter with extraordinary clearness and force. “All things,” says the apostle, comprising especially the things which he has just recounted, and which appertain to man’s new creation, “are of God, who hath reconciled us,” once enemies, “to himself by Jesus Christ, and,” in pursuance of his mercy, “hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” Reconciled ourselves, we have it in charge to minister the doctrine of reconciliation to others; “to wit, that God was

in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And while he hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, he "hath committed unto us," literally, as in the margin, "hath put in us the word of reconciliation." It follows "now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ;" we have received the word of reconciliation from him, we appear in his name, we execute his commission, "as though," O wonderful condescension! "God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead," as if that great Ambassador himself urged the plan, "be ye reconciled to God."

But what is the ground or reason of all this? What is it that forms and sustains the whole? It is, as you are next apprised, the propitiatory sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, instituted for the attainment of this grand design by God the Father. "For he," with whom we are so earnestly pressed to seek and accept of reconciliation, "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the right-

eousness of God in him.” CHRIST, then, IS HE WHO KNEW NO SIN. YET HE WAS, BY THE FATHER’S APPOINTMENT, MADE SIN FOR US, who, alas! knew no righteousness, who were totally estranged from our primitive innocence and integrity. And he was made sin for us, that, in the gift and process of his restraining grace, WE MIGHT BE MADE, OR MIGHT BECOME, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. These are the things which assure us of reconciliation, and which, by the Holy Spirit’s agency, give effect to all its ministrations. They are familiar, honored fathers and brothers, to your best thoughts and feelings. Yet permit me, on this occasion, to recall your attention to them, with prayer that the God of truth and love, the Father of lights and mercies, may sanctify and bless our meditations.

I. CHRIST IS HE WHO KNEW NO SIN. He was *perfectly* sinless, and he *alone* was sinless.

1. Christ was *perfectly* sinless: “he knew

no sin.” Testimonies of Scripture abundantly prove that, in his humanity, in the nature which he assumed for our sakes, he knew no sin of any kind or degree—no sinful tendency, or guilt, or stain. He knew sin in others—never in himself. He had no perception or feeling of it there. “For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled”—“holy,” with respect to God—“harmless,” with respect to men—“undefiled,” in himself—“separated from sinners.” “In all things,” indeed, “it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren. As the children,” therefore, “are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;” and he “suffered, being tempted.” Nay, he “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” He “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” To his most observant and bitter adversaries he could make the appeal, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” “The prince of this world had nothing in him.” “Ye know that he was manifested

to take away our sins; and in him is no sin:" "ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish," in himself, "and without spot" from any external taint or defilement. Call to mind his miraculous conception and birth: he partook not of man's hereditary guilt and depravity, but was then also "holy." Trace his course through all his sojourn on this earth of ours, where he "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Behold him, when "the hour was come," amidst all the solemnities of the garden and the cross, till he yielded up his spirit into the hands of his Father. Follow him in every period, through every circumstance; your conclusion is still the same: he "knew no sin"—he was *perfectly* sinless.

2. Christ *alone* was thus sinless. This prerogative is peculiar to him of all that have shared the nature of man. Adam, indeed, was

“made upright;” for he was made “in the image,” and “after the likeness,” of God. But how soon he revolted and fell! and his descendants, as naturally proceeding from him, “are all under sin;” for “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” “The Scripture hath,” accordingly, “concluded all under sin”—hath shut all up together, as in a dark and dreary prison-house, whence there is no door of escape but that which the hand of mercy shall open. Jesus alone is spotless and pure—“the holy one and the just.” It is in harmony with this great truth, and is indeed powerfully significant of it, that the expression in the text does not assume the form of a simple declaration, but of a title which conveys the notion of special and unshared distinction: it is not merely “he knew no sin,” but “he who knew no sin”—whose peculiar character and claim it is to be wholly immaculate. There is One, then, who vindicates the honors of our humanity—one, and one alone, in whom our nature is

untouched, unstained with sin—one, too, who undertakes our cause, who appears as the head and representative, the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord of our race. He is “the last Adam,” of whom the first Adam was a “figure,” or type. But he is not only the possessor of life, like the first Adam when he was made “a living soul;” he is the author and giver of life—its fullness, its fountain, who came that we “might have life,” and “might have it more abundantly;” and he is, therefore, “a quickening,” or life-giving, “Spirit.” He is “the second man,” who more than countervails the sins and sorrows done to the first man’s transgression and its disastrous influence. He is “the Lord from heaven,” who has descended to earth, clothed himself in the vesture of our nature, and reopened Paradise to an exiled and fugitive world. Man’s Restorer is “he who knew no sin.”

II. Yet He, who himself “knew no sin,” was
MADE SIN, BY THE FATHER’S APPOINTMENT, FOR

us. Each of these particulars demands our serious and devout consideration.

1. Christ, who “knew no sin,” was *made sin*. But how, or in what sense? Sin may be regarded as denoting *three* things, or as comprehending them in its ordinary meaning and application—the *act* of sin, whether in thought, word, or deed; the *depravity* of sin consequent upon its act; and the *penalty* which is due to both. But the holy Jesus was not made sin by any *act* of sin, by personal transgression, by becoming, in that sense, a sinner. O no! nor was he made sin, as if he were infected with man’s *depravity*, as if our sin were so imputed to him as to make him, even in the smallest degree, partaker of our spiritual and moral corruption. Far from us be the thought! The passages of Scripture which we have already produced fully prove that, in these two senses, he knew no sin. How, then, could he be made sin? In the only sense which remains. He was made sin, when he was appointed to bear

the *penalty* of sin—the death which was its due. (11)
Yes! he was made sin when “his soul was made an offering for sin”—when “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree”—when he died that death might die, and that “grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life” by him. The proper import of the term, in such a connection as this, may be clearly ascertained from the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “But now once in the end of the world hath he,” that is, Christ, “appeared to *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was *once offered to bear the sins of many*; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time *without sin*.” When he appeared the first time, it was to be *offered—to bear the sins of many—to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, and thus to be made sin. But when he shall appear the second time, it shall be without sin, in the sense already so plainly indicated,

“unto salvation”—the entire and eternal salvation of all the Christian’s future heaven. The apostle’s word, then, conveys the notion of sin-offering, expiation, atonement, satisfaction for sin; but conveys it with singular and impressive energy. “Behold the Lamb of God!” He “beareth,” and he thus “taketh away the sin of the world.”

2. But Christ was made sin *by the Father’s appointment*: God “hath made him to be sin for us.” “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;” “it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” The Father “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all”—“gave his only-begotten Son”—“sent” him to be the propitiation for our sins.” True it is that he was “taken,” and “by wicked hands” was “crucified and slain.” But, in the midst of all, he “was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” We are taught to look beyond the agency and ministry of man—beyond the malignity of our

Lord's "betrayers and murderers," and to fill our minds with the thought of God's ineffable love, issuing from its own eternal well-spring, and flowing in the tide of its own mercy. The all-atoning sacrifice of Christ is not the *cause* which *produced* God's love to man. No! But it is the *grand medium* through which that love, already existing, and already waiting to impart its priceless treasures, finds free and full transmission, in union with the maintenance, nay, with the manifestation and glory of God's own righteousness. How peculiar, how pre-eminent is this love! "For scarcely for a righteous man," says St. Paul, or for a man of unimpeachable justice and integrity, who observes all that is right, and allows nothing that is wrong, "will one die." Such a man may awaken great respect and even veneration; but he will scarcely engage the love which would prompt another to die in his behalf. "Yet peradventure for a good man," or for *the* good man—for it is worthy of note that the apostle's

own language here becomes more definite—peradventure for the man of benignity, of spontaneous and communicative love, “some,” to whom he may have been a benefactor, and who may have drawn blessings from his bounty, “would even dare to die.” “But,” the apostle proceeds, making a contrast, not a comparison, with these forms of human regard, “God commendeth his love toward us”—proves that it is his, single and unrivaled, and recommends it by its own transcendent claims, “in that, while we were,” not righteous or good, but “sinners,” “yet sinners,” “Christ,” by the provisions of his wisdom and grace, “died for us.” “Herein is love,” beyond all parallel, beyond all estimate—love which far passes the utmost limits of man’s or angel’s thought.

3. Yes, Christ died *for us*; he was “made sin *for us*,” he “suffered for sins, the *just* for the *unjust*, that he might bring us,” by a new and most blessed introduction or access, “to God.” The history of man can not fail to raise

and expand our views of that love divine which has made him its object. Review the fact of his *first revolt from God*. How aggravated in all its parts! That a creature so rich in endowment and privilege, bright in the image of his God, and admitted to free and filial intercourse with him—surrounded by the beauties and bliss of Paradise—and led onward, in glad anticipation, to yet higher joys, of which the tree of life in the midst of the garden was doubtless a sacramental sign and pledge, that he should, for one prohibition, for one gentle restraint, violate all his obligations, and plunge into transgression—who can tell the sum of ingratitude which this involves? Think also of man's *perpetual rebellion*, after he had fallen from his God. Ages succeeding to ages passed away; Divine judgments were interposed; the Deluge covered all the globe; the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah were kindled from heaven; revolutions, with their wonted attendants, famine, pestilence, and war, swept over the nations—revelations

were given, the presence of the LORD was manifested in glory, patriarchs journeyed, prophets taught, saints lived, and martyrs died—and yet man continued to sin. See his *deep degradation* and *helpless misery* at the time when the LORD'S Messiah came. Darkness had become more gross; depravity abounded on every side, among Jews as well as Gentiles; the faithful ones were few. All things seemed ripening for destruction. God be praised, they were found ripe for mercy. Then it was that day dawned // on our dreary night. “When,” in the apostle’s forcible language, “we were *yet* without strength”—“*yet* sinners,” or “enemies,” “in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” How is the love of God enhanced! You see that it is great in itself—great in all its manifestations—great in the “unspeakable gift” which it bestows—great in its endless provisions—and, O! is it not felt to be great, unutterably great, when it is considered as descending, in its fullness of grace and truth, on sinful and unworthy man?

“God is love.” That is one of the simplest and most sublime utterances ever given in the language of men: how deep! how large! But it gains its glorious illustration in the mission and death of Jesus, the holy One, “who gave himself for our sins, according to the will of God and our Father,” and who thus “obtained eternal redemption for us.”

III. Christ was made sin for us, THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE, OR MIGHT BECOME, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.

1. That we might become the righteousness of God in him by *receiving, through faith in his blood, the gift of a present and personal justification before God*; that we might enjoy the privilege of them who “are in Christ Jesus,” and to whom there is “now no condemnation;” and that we might thus regain our forfeited relation as children of God. “The righteousness of God” is a phrase which St. Paul emphatically uses in connection with a sinner’s

justification. Take, for example, what he says in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." Why? Because of its *power*; "for it is the *power of God*:" because of its *mercy*, to which its power ministers; "for it is the power of God *unto salvation*:" and because of its *impartial grace*, in which its power and mercy find a ready and unconfined application, suspended only on the simple condition of faith; "for it is the power of God unto salvation to *every one that believeth*; to the Jew first," to whom, in the economy of the "only wise God our Savior," its offers were first made, "and also to the Greek." These are reasons, drawn from the very character of the Gospel, in virtue of which the apostle might well not be ashamed of it. Such a Gospel was to him, as I trust it also is to us, a theme of the highest glorying, not of shame. But how does it appear that the Gospel possesses this character? The reason next assigned declares: "For therein is the right-

eousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” If there were any doubt with respect to the precise and determinate meaning of the apostle’s language here, how entirely would it be removed in the third chapter of the Epistle, where the same subject is resumed, and more largely pursued! “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” What righteousness of God is thus manifested and witnessed? “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.” How does this yet farther appear? “Being justified freely,” as you afterward read, “by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness:

that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Penitent believers thus become the righteousness of God in Christ. The penalty of man's sin was imputed to him; and, in him, the righteousness of God by faith is imputed to us. Happy day! when the faint and weary spirit finds rest in the attainment of this righteousness. The "great and strong wind" which "rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD," the "earthquake" and the "fire" have passed away, and the "still small voice" is heard. The LORD is in that voice, which whispers and imparts his mercy. "Justified by faith, we have peace with him." The shadows break and disperse, and "the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings." Heaven shines in new glory; earth blooms with new beauty; a new pulse

beats, and new life flows. "Joy and gladness are "found" now, "thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

2. That we might also become the righteousness of God in him *by receiving*, through the faith which unites us to him, and along with the blessing of justifying grace, *the gift of spiritual regeneration and renewal*—not only righteousness imputed to us, but righteousness planted within us—"Christ in you." Believers in Jesus are admonished, in St. Paul's language to the Ephesians, that they "put off the old man"—that they "be renewed in the spirit of their mind"—that they "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." For "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The inseparable connection which subsists between the two great parts of the Christian salvation—justification and sanctification—is to be carefully observed and maintained. These blessings are

indeed distinct in their own nature. Justification denotes what our most merciful God and Father accomplishes *for us*, when he forgives our iniquities, admits us to his favor and fellowship, restores us to our proper relation to himself, which we had lost, and again makes us partakers of what one of the early Christian writers calls “that ancient adoption,” which man enjoyed before the fall. Sanctification denotes what he accomplishes *in us*, when he breaks the power of sin, infuses spiritual light, and life, and love, and “transforms us by the renewing of our mind.” But the two blessings constantly attend each other. When God justifies, he also regenerates—he commences that work of sanctification within us which is to advance more and yet more till, as “the very God of peace,” he shall “sanctify us wholly;” he imparts that new nature which is to grow up into its own promised maturity, “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The connection of which

we speak occupies a prominent place in the Epistle to the Romans; and it formed an eminent part of the testimony which was confided to our fathers. They preached salvation in all its range and compass. In opposition to the Pharisaism of man's nature, they proclaimed justification by faith only—salvation “by grace,” its one source and fountain, “through faith,” its sole condition; and, in opposition to the Antinomianism of man's nature, they proclaimed that God renews whom he accepts—that the Spirit of adoption, who, by his testimony, conveys to us the assurance of God's fatherly love in our pardon and admission to the happy filial relation, instantly, and by means of that very testimony, creates filial love in our hearts, the principle of the divine nature which we now partake—that, in a word, the faith through which we are saved is the “faith which worketh by love,” and which issues in a new creation. They published the mercy which freely saves, but which, at the same time, lays

us under the highest obligations—which brings its own plentiful gifts to cheer the guilty and mourning spirit, but which also urges us by new motives, and aids us by new helps, to engage ourselves to God, and to seek an entire spiritual renovation. “God is the LORD,” says the Psalmist, “which hath shewed us light.” But it is a light which penetrates and transforms, while it illuminates and cheers. When we turn with the heart to the Lord, and receive, “with unvailed face,” the glory which he discloses, “we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Christ, then, was made sin for us that, gaining in him the righteousness of personal justification, we might also gain the righteousness of a changed and sanctified nature.

3. That we might, in accordance with all this, and as its great practical results, become the righteousness of God in him *by receiving power, through faith in his name, and in virtue of our union with him*, to “serve” the Lord our God

“*without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.*” God in Christ bestows his mercies, and, by the operation of his Spirit, creates our natures anew; but he also advances his high claims—claims pre-eminently founded on redemption. What is the *sacrifice* which he now prescribes? The sacrifice of ourselves. “Bind” that “sacrifice,” then, “with cords,” the cords of grateful love and obedience, “even unto the horns of the altar:” let it be “living, holy, acceptable—your reasonable service.” What *surrender* or *presentation* does he now demand? The surrender or presentation of ourselves in devoted submissiveness. “Yield yourselves unto God,” says St. Paul, “as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God;” “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” To whom shall we now *live*? To “the Lord”—to “him who died for us, and rose again;” for Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from

all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" he "bare our sins," to recite St. Peter's language, "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." What *fruit* shall we now bear? the "fruit of righteousness"—"fruit unto holiness"—"much fruit," such as becomes branches grafted in the heavenly Vine, and cultivated by the hand of the great Vine-Dresser—the "fruit of the Spirit" which is "in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth"—"fruits of your righteousness," which God can "increase," till they who resign themselves to the guidance of his truth and grace shall be "filled" with them—"with the fruits of righteousness," which are by Jesus Christ, unto his "praise and glory." Evangelical righteousness is *one*: its several parts may be distinctly contemplated; but they exist in the strictest harmony with each other, and they visibly discover themselves in the Christian's practical obedience to God. For when he is "saved," according to the evan-

gelical way or plan of salvation, and is “created in Christ Jesus,” it is “unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Let us “follow after righteousness;” and let it be our humble prayer that, by the aid which the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” waits to supply, “the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us”—that “like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also,” raised from the death of sin and misery, may “walk in newness of life.” Reconciliation, then, is provided for man—provided by “him who knew no sin,” who in our nature joined in his most blessed person inseparably and eternally with the Divine, was perfectly and alone sinless—provided in the true atoning sacrifice which, by the Father’s appointment, he has offered for us, and provided with the intent that we, through the faith which unites us to him, may recover our filial relation by justifying grace—may rejoice in the filial nature as renewed by the

“sanctification of the Spirit”—and may resign ourselves to the filial obedience which we owe to God our Father—that we may, in a word, “become the righteousness of God in him.” And thus, while we yet sojourn in the wilderness, shall we be made “meet to be partakers of the inheritance” which rises to the eye of faith and hope beyond the Jordan of death—“the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The provision of reconciliation is a provision for man—for universal man; and how wonderfully is it suited to his circumstances and wants! When you survey the inhabitants of the earth, you see that, in many things, they differ—in climate, color, language, customs, and in all the gradations which subsist between the rudest and the most cultivated states of life; but you see other things in which they always and everywhere agree. Turn whither you will, to ages past or present, to lands nearer or more remote, wherever you find man apart from the agencies of heavenly grace, you find guilt which needs

remission—depravity which needs renewal—and misery which sighs for bliss as yet untasted and unknown. What shall meet the condition of our race in these its mournful characters? Penitential sorrows, if they were even at command, efforts to procure self-relief, costly gifts, and voluntary pains, all are unavailing. To whom, then, shall sinners, a world of sinners, go? To Him who has wrought their reconciliation, and who waits to create their peace. He presents the atonement which satisfies all the demands of justice; he confers the grace which meets and supplies every want; he guides to man's true happiness—happiness in God. Let the hungry come, and he will feed them—the thirsty, and he will give them drink; let them who labor and are heavy laden come, and he will refresh them—the poor, and he will make them rich. He has been “lifted up from the earth,” suffering the death which he was appointed to die; and he draws by the mighty attractions of the cross—by the light of its truth, by the revela-

tions of its love, and by the spiritual influence which attends its faithful exhibition; he draws, and he will draw, till, up to the full measure of his own prophetic promise, he shall "draw all men unto himself." Man is a sinner beyond what he can himself conceive; but he is redeemed, and he may be saved: he is lost; but he may be found by that good Shepherd who goes into the mountains and the deserts in quest of the one stray sheep: he is the prodigal, who has wandered into a far country—a fugitive in sin, and weariness, and destitution; but he may be recovered to his Father's favor, fellowship, and home. "Peace on earth" is proclaimed, the peace of reconciliation, with all the privileges and obligations which thence arise, "peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near;" for Christ is himself "our peace, who," in the sweep and compass of his mercy, "hath made both one."

Reconciliation is provided for man; and shall not its ministry still be exercised, as in times

past, with humble and yet confident expectation of success? The trumpet which announces the Lord's jubilee ought to give no uncertain or doubtful sound. Look at *the days of the apostles*. I need not remind you, reverend fathers and brethren, how these first ministers of our Lord published the doctrine of reconciliation—with what assurance of its truth—with what faith in its power. The example of St. Paul will at once recur to your thoughts. He could say, in his own name, and in the name of his fellow-laborers, "We preach Christ crucified—the power of God, and the wisdom of God." He "determined not to know any thing," even among the Corinthians, learned and wise as many of them were, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" he disclaimed all glorying but glorying "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and what a sketch does he give us of the character of his preaching when, in the earnest expostulation which he addresses to the Galatians, he says, "Who hath bewitched you,

that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" Ministrations like these, applied and sealed by the Spirit of truth, were not in vain. The message of reconciliation by Christ's death on the cross, prevailed over ignorance, sin, prejudice, pride, and every form of opposition, till the holy apostle could use the joyous language, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." Look also at *the age of the Reformation*. Primitive truth was then revived. The merits of Christ's all-sufficient and most efficacious sacrifice were made known far and wide. Salvation as attainable by faith, and the holy fruits which thence ensue, were urged with the clear evidence of truth, and the persuasiveness of love. And what was the result? Darkness was broken; the sleep of ages departed; inquiry was roused; lessons, which pointed at once to faith in our Lord Jesus

Christ, were not only promptly given, but cordially received; and many were made free. Once more, "the word of God was not bound," but "ran," and was "glorified." Look at *the age of our fathers*. They published the great evangelical message which formed the substance of apostolical testimony, and which the early reformers labored so successfully to revive and restore. First of all, they published it in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and then elsewhere, till "the word of the Lord," by means of their zealous and indefatigable ministrations, "sounded out" to this mighty continent, to the West Indies, and to other parts of the western world—as it continues to sound out in different directions, where God, by his grace and providence, prepares the way. And with what effect? Our fathers themselves have told us; and many yet alive cherish memories of the rise and progress of good which will not die. Venerable men who now hear me, and in whose presence among us we greatly rejoice, can

retrace the progress of the work in these lands through many years of toil and prosperity, among whites, blacks, and Indian tribes. And still that work spreads. We look around us, pause in humble admiration, and cry, "What hath God wrought?" Glory to him alone! Signs and evidences multiply around us that, "by the foolishness of preaching," by that grand central theme, *Christ crucified*, which his faithful servants have in all ages proclaimed, but which the wise ones of this world deride as foolishness, it still pleases him "to save them that believe." Proof is yet amply supplied concerning the truth of the apostle's declaration, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" "The simplicity that is in Christ" prevails. That simplicity is the best philosophy of Christian men and Christian ministers.

If, then, the gift of reconciliation is thus provided, and if its ministry, which God has confided to his servants, has thus been attended with success, in former and in present times, shall we not strive to maintain that ministry in its primitive purity, simplicity, and power? Fathers of the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States, and in its foreign agencies, who have “borne” no small portion of “the burden and heat of the day,” and have witnessed many a triumph of the reconciliation which you love to preach, accept of my warm and affectionate congratulations on the service which you have been enabled to render in your great Master’s cause—on the manifestations of spiritual prosperity which it has been your joy to see—and on the hopes which now spring and flourish around you. The work to which you have consecrated your talents, your toils, your days, has not failed; and it will not fail. You will yet, I trust, “see greater things” than you have seen. Brethren, who are employing your

efforts for the Lord in the possession of experience matured through the course of years—whose energies are yet unabated—who are the links of union between the former ministers of the Methodist Church on this continent, and them that are now rising up—and on whom no ordinary responsibility rests, let me congratulate you also, while I express my confident persuasion that you will continue to hold up the torch of truth in all its brightness—that you will carry out the plans and purposes of your honored predecessors to yet future years—and that you will transmit to others, unimpaired and entire, the deposit which is intrusted to you. And, my young brethren in this ministry, suffer me to address you. “Other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.” God give you his blessing! Your prayer will ascend, “The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us.” And may that prayer be heard! Imitate the spirit and conduct of the men who have

gone before you, and of others with whom you feel it your privilege and delight to stand in ministerial fellowship. "Hold fast the form of sound words—in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Be not diverted from your proper path by man's traditions, man's philosophy, or any of man's vain imaginings. Preach the doctrine of reconciliation which your fathers and brethren have preached; and preach it with their faithfulness and zeal. The field of labor expands before you. Occupy it for your Lord. Go to the cities, towns, and villages of this vast country—go where its mountains rise, its rivers roll, its forests wave, and its valleys sweep—go, if the hand of God shall beckon you, to scenes yet more remote—go with the love of Christ in your hearts, and his message on your lips—go, through "evil report, and good report, as deceivers"—for so some may deem you, as they deemed your fathers—"and yet true"—go, keeping the cross ever in your eye, relying on the Holy Spirit's presence and grace, and

expecting success—go, regardless of toil, unchecked by difficulties, and unappalled by danger—“GO, AND THE LORD BE WITH YOU!”

THE FULLNESS
OF
CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE.

BY

REV. FREDERICK J. JOBSON, A. M.

S E R M O N .

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”—EPHESIANS III, 14-21.

WHAT Christians we should be, if each of us comprehended our privileges as fully as did the apostle St. Paul! If, instead of doubting, fearing, and desponding, under the sense of our own weakness, and the remembrance of our

unfaithfulness, we were to fix our earnest gaze upon the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Gospel, till the wealth of their meaning penetrated and filled our understandings, and till their strength and fullness moved and governed all our powers, what a mighty change would be accomplished in us! Why is it, my brethren, that the spiritual graces of professing Christians are now so far below the apostolic standard? It is because we fail to comprehend fully the great truth, that our possible attainments in Christian holiness are to be measured, not by our own feebleness, but by God's power; not by the weakness and unworthiness of the human recipient of grace, but by the almighty mercy of the divine Bestower. For, failing thus to comprehend what God is able and willing to do within us, we fail to believe, pray for, and receive, the transforming grace which would make us shining examples of holiness, and efficient instruments in blessing and converting the world.

The great apostle of the Gentiles, in the inspired language just read, would lead us forth to a full and comprehensive view of Christian privileges. It is, as you will perceive, the language of prayer and supplication which he offered to God for the members of the Church at Ephesus, when he was a prisoner for Christ at Rome. That Church, by its situation and influence, being at the very seat of idolatry and Asiatic power, was evidently the object of great attention and care on the part of the apostles and their brother evangelists. Timothy resided there for some time; as did also the apostle St. John, both before and after his banishment. St. Paul had planted that Church when on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem; and afterward he remained there for three years, preaching the Gospel, and adding to the Church, till he was driven from the city through the tumult which arose from the fear that the superb temple of Diana—one of the seven wonders of the world—would be forsaken, and that the idol-

makers of the richest and most luxurious city of Asia Minor would be left without employment.

The apostles saw the importance of great cities to Christianity, as the centers of wealth, learning, and power, and therefore mainly directed their attention to them; and undoubtedly it was on this account that Paul, who had labored at Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Philippi, desired so earnestly to preach the Gospel at Rome, the great metropolis of the world. And now, when away from the Ephesians, and a prisoner at Rome, he is not less earnest in his endeavors to promote their spiritual growth and prosperity. He writes this affectionate epistle to them—an epistle full of instruction and exhortation for their attainment of the highest state of Christian excellence. And in this part of his epistle he records the prayer which he solemnly offered for them before God—a prayer in which he shows us how sublimely great and comprehensive are the

blessings provided for us through Christ Jesus; and which, if improved by us, as it is designed to be, will lead us to seek and obtain those full and exalted blessings. It is, in fact, a prayer which should be adopted and offered by every regenerate child of God who desires full consecration to him.

The Ephesians, to whom the apostle wrote, and for whom he prayed, had been quickened from the death of trespasses and sins, raised into newness of life, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. They were "saints," as he declares in his opening salutation; but he saw that they were still imperfect, and below the standard they were called to attain. And, therefore, his large and expansive soul poured forth for them this prayer, expressive of his earnest desire that they might avail themselves fully of the saving grace of God, and be enriched with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. And in no passage of his inspired writings does the fullness of St. Paul's comprehension

of Christian privilege appear more glowingly than in that which forms our text. In this prayer the apostle goes beyond the usual sweep of his own vast and inspired conceptions. He had been gladdened by the information he had received of their deportment in the Gospel; and filled with the grandeur of his theme—the provisions of Divine mercy—his soul is so highly elevated by the Holy Spirit, and he has such dazzling and extended views of what may be attained by man through Jesus Christ, that he seems to exhaust even his surpassing power of language in the expressions he employs. For, what wondrous terms are these—“strengthened with the Spirit’s might”—“Christ dwelling in the heart by faith”—“rooted and grounded in love”—“comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, length, depth, and height”—“to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge”—and to be “filled with all the fullness of God!” What a climax is here reached of thought and expression; and what a magnificent view is thus

opened to us of the glory of Christian privilege.

Nor is this a mere vision of a warm and brilliant imagination. It is a revelation of solid and robust thought—a conviction of a spiritually-enlightened and divinely-directed understanding. The apostle expects all this vast privilege for Christian believers, because he remembers who is the almighty Benefactor—even the ineffable Existence, who is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think,” and who has riches of spiritual endowment in his possession. What wonder that, with such exalted views, and with such firm and reasonable faith, his grateful and bounding heart should breathe forth the exultant ascription of praise to God with which the text concludes—“Now, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!”

Let us, for our personal edification,

I. INQUIRE INTO THE NATURE OF THOSE BLESS-

INGS FOR WHICH WE ARE HERE TAUGHT, BY THE WORDS AND EXAMPLE OF THE INSPIRED APOSTLE, TO PRAY;

II. SURVEY THE GROUND ON WHICH WE MAY PLACE OUR FIRM RELIANCE FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THIS MOST ENLARGED PETITION; and,

III. LEARN TO ASCRIBE THE GLORY OF ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS TO HIM FROM WHOM THEY SO BOUNTIFULLY PROCEED.

I confess to you that I approach this great subject with fear and trembling; and that, not only from a sense of my own unfitness to handle a theme so exalted and pure, but also from the thought that it is a subject to be meditated upon rather than explained, and which the feebleness of human exposition may easily impair. Justice to such holy thoughts and holy words no preacher can hope to do fully; but since this passage of holy Scripture has been written for our learning, let us pray that even an imperfect illustration of it may, by the Divine blessing, lead us to desire and seek the fullness of

Christian privilege provided for us through the Gospel.

I. Then, we are to inquire into the nature of those blessings which we are here taught to seek, by the language and example of an inspired apostle.

And, generally; we may observe, they are *spiritual* blessings, and blessings to be sought by the regenerate—as we may learn from the opening salutation and foregoing parts of this epistle. The Ephesians to whom the apostle wrote were Ephesians who had been saved by grace. Once they were far off, but had been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. They had become, as he says, “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; and being fitly framed and built together, they had become a habitation of God through the Spirit.” But though thus raised up from

their natural, ruined, and fallen state, into spiritual life, and resting on a sure foundation, yet they were not complete and perfect; they were not strong and firm; their souls were not the constant abode of God, and filled with him, as it was their privilege to be. And so “for this cause”—that is, for their being perfected in Christ—the apostle reverently bowed his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, “of whom the whole spiritual family in heaven and earth is named,” as the children of God; and sought for them by prayer, out of the rich and inexhaustible stores of Divine grace—here called “the riches of his glory”—the blessings which he describes.

1. And the first of these blessings for which he prayed, and which we are thereby taught earnestly to seek, is that of *great spiritual strength*—“to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” That is, to be mightily strengthened in the soul by the Spirit of God, so as to be able to abide steadfast in his

service; to perform, faithfully, Christian duties; resist, manfully, the temptations of Satan and of the world; and to endure, patiently, the afflictions of this mortal life. A weak Christian is an unstable Christian. He is shaken by every wind that blows, and is often found trembling in his feebleness, instead of being "steadfast and immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord." He is not constant and persevering in religious duties, but is fickle and uncertain in prayer, in faith, and in all spiritual exercises. His intercourse with God is easily interrupted; his closet duties are easily interfered with; his outward profession is often undecided and wavering; he is weak in principle, weak in action, and weak in character. He does not advance to Christian maturity, but remains a babe through succeeding months and years. He is ever conning over the mere alphabet of religion, dwelling upon the mere rudiments of faith, always learning the first principles, and never going on unto perfection. You

find him beginning anew almost every day of his life; so that he is ever learning, and yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth. His faith is weak and feeble, so that he can not trust in God and appropriate the promises to himself. There is always some "*if*" or "*but*" in the way of his appropriation of them. They may belong to others who are more advanced in grace, but not to him till he shall become more faithful. And so the weak Christian passes on from week to week, from month to month, and from year to year—always feeling himself unworthy of being blessed, and forgetting that it is Christ's worthiness and not his own upon which he ought to rely; and thus he remains weak and wavering, strengthless and trembling. And this, alas! is the case with scores and hundreds of God's people. Well, then, might the apostle pray, and teach us to pray, for inward and spiritual strength, so that there might be strong faith in God possessing our souls, and rendering us faithful in God's service.

So with regard to *temptation*—it is by the Spirit's might within the soul that we can resist and overcome it. A weak Christian is a frequent mark for the arrows of Satan. The enemy will be sure to tempt and harass such a man, and to endeavor to discourage him to the utmost. Not a doubt, or a fear, will arise in the breast of the timid one, but Satan will increase it, and will aim to draw the weak believer's mind off from the view of Christ's all-sufficiency to the remembrance of his own weakness and worthlessness. "O no, it is not for thee—this great and glorious promise!" the tempter will suggest; "thou art too unworthy. Remember thy unfaithfulness—thy repeated neglect of duty—thy want of earnestness. This promise is not for thee. Do not presume to lay hold of it!"

And so with other temptations which move and affect the weak Christian—temptations from the glitter and glare of the world—temptations from its gains and its losses, its smiles and its frowns. These decoy him into the wrong path—they

elate him unduly, or cast him down. In fact, a weak Christian does not sufficiently forsake the world to be free from its power and influence. He lingers and looks back, too much like Lot's wife; and is always in danger of being overwhelmed, like her, with destruction. Well, then, might the apostle teach us to seek firmness, resolution, and inward strength to resist Satan, and to overcome the world.

So, again, with enduring *afflictions and troubles*. These require great strength of heart and fortitude of soul to be wrought within us by the Holy Spirit. And there are seasons in the life of man—I might almost say in the lives of all men—when trials accumulate, and seem to come in like a flood upon us, so that we have to say with Jacob, “All these things are against me.” There are seasons, I say, in the lives of nearly all of us, when not only one wave suddenly passes over the soul, but when we have to say, “All thy billows are gone over me;” when “out of the depths” we have to “cry unto the Lord.”

And what shall the Christian do, at such seasons, without being strengthened with the Spirit's might in the inner man? He can not be upheld, then, by weakness. Suppose persecution and tribulation come to the Church of Christ—for that Church, like its Head, is despised and rejected of men; it is crowned with thorns, arrayed in mock garments, spit upon, and smitten by the world—what then shall enable the Christian firmly to adhere to the Church, and not, in terror at the world's heathen rage, go back from following the Savior? Nothing but inward spiritual strength. Or, suppose losses of health and property should suddenly be apportioned him, as they were to Job; or, that those whom he has trusted should deceive and desert him, in the time of necessity, as they did David; or, that he should be watched, accused, and condemned, like Daniel; or, be seized with mortal sickness, like Hezekiah; and lie gasping beyond all human relief? What can support and sustain the Christian in

such extremities? Not weakness and feebleness. They did not suffice even for smaller trials. And if, when running with footmen, the soul was wearied, what shall it do when it is summoned to run with horsemen? There must be strength—divine strength, lent to the struggler. Let us, then, earnestly pray that we may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. No other strength than the Almighty's strength, the strength of the Holy Spirit, will avail us for believing and serving God, for resisting temptation, and for enduring trial and affliction. It is not bodily strength we can rely upon, for, like Samson, we may have gigantic corporeal strength, and yet be inwardly weak. It is not, simply, intellectual strength that will keep and preserve us, for it did not preserve Solomon. It is not carnal confidence, self-reliance, which is nowadays so much lauded—it is not this which will serve us, for Peter had it, and fell suddenly and swiftly. Nothing but strength from on high, imparted to the inner

man, can avail us—nothing less than spiritual fortification by the Divine hand of the inward citadel and garrison of the soul. O, let us pray for it!

2. The second blessing named by the apostle in this sublime and comprehensive prayer, is the *indwelling of Christ in the believer's heart*—“that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” There is no doubt that in this passage, and, indeed, throughout a great portion of this epistle, there is the figurative allusion to a temple. It might be occasioned by the great and magnificent temple of Diana, which was in the midst of the Ephesians to whom St. Paul wrote; for it was no uncommon thing with him to employ figurative allusions most familiar to the minds of those whom he addressed. And commanding such public attention as this temple at Ephesus did, it is easy to suppose that the apostle had this in his remembrance when writing. Or, it might be that he drew his imagery from his own mental associations with the temple at

Jerusalem. Or, both these buildings might supply to him forms of expression. But, that this is the figure in his mind—that of a temple—is plain; for he had just before represented the members of the Ephesian Church as a building fitly framed together, and growing into a holy temple in the Lord. And now, after praying that the spiritual building may be made strong by the almighty Spirit, he prays that Christ may possess and inhabit it; that Christ may dwell not only in the Church collectively—“the body of Him that filleth all in all;” but also in the individual hearts of the members of the Church—“that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

And this, my brethren, is a clear Christian privilege—to have Christ dwelling in our hearts. Not merely drawing nigh to us, as our friend and companion, but entering into our inmost souls, as no mere friend and companion can, making them his temples—so that the inner man becomes his consecrated shrine—his “holy

place," which he purifies by his presence, and irradiates with his glory. "If any man love me," says Christ, "he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "I will dwell in them, and walk in them," says God when speaking of his people; and "if any man hear my voice," says Christ, "and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me." "Christ *in you*," says Paul, when writing to the Colossians—"Christ in you the hope of glory." Not Christ merely coming to you, visiting or meeting you; but "Christ *in you*." So that it is clearly our privilege to have Christ possessing and inhabiting us. Not merely meeting us in our closets, at our family altars, in our social means of grace, and in public worship; but to have him dwelling in our hearts, whether we be in the street, or the field, or the market, in the steamboat, or on the railroad—so that we are to be, in a deep and veritable sense, the temples of the living God.

And this, the apostle says, is *by faith*. He never forgets the great evangelical principle which unites the soul with Christ. The cross is ever before him, and he is careful to refer every stage of man's salvation unto it. Justification, sanctification, overcoming the world, living in, walking with, and possessing Christ—are all *by faith*. Christ first enters the heart by faith: “if any man hear my voice and open the door:” *there* is the hand of faith employed to open the door. And *here* we find that firm trust and reliance upon Christ are essential to his abiding with us: he *dwells* in the heart by faith.

And, O, how blessed it must be to have Christ dwelling in the heart! His coming is blessed—unspeakably blessed. When from the darkness, the ruin, and desolation of sin, he renews the heart in righteousness, and fills it with light and joy—that is unspeakably blessed. But to feel him inhabit and possess the heart as his consecrated temple—to hear within us his divine

voice saying, "This is my house, and here I will dwell, to adorn, and beautify, and strengthen this soul with the graces of my Spirit; yea, I will feast here!"—what a glory is this!—how full of awe, as well as of holy delight, is the thought! We are ready to say, with the adoring king of Israel, "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth!"

My brethren, let us see our high privilege in this respect, and resolve to attain it. We know what it is to have Christ coming to our hearts at times and seasons; but do we know what it is to have him dwelling with us? He came at our conversion, and he would have remained uninterruptedly if we had kept the heart with all diligence—if we had always been watchful and prayerful. But, alas! pride beckoned, and we allowed it to enter; anger threatened, and we did not take warning, but allowed it to grow and rise into an evil flame within us; the door of the heart was opened, little by little, to the world, till at last the love of the world again

possessed the heart; and, in some instances, there was a stumbling into gross sin. But Christ can not dwell where sin is; and he departed from us. And though, in the darkness and desolation which followed, we cried to Him to return and save us, yet he has not had the entire and complete surrender of our affections, so that he has not *dwelt* in our hearts, he has not been permitted to make in them a constant abode. Still, the indwelling of Christ is our privilege: it is not too late to seek it. Let us seek it *now*—seek it earnestly—and seek it *by faith*.

3. The apostle further leads us to pray and seek for *full establishment in Christian affection*—"that ye may be rooted and grounded in love." The metaphor here employed is twofold. One, that of the general figure, a building—grounded. That is, firmly settled on a deep and solid foundation, so that the superstructure rests secure amidst all storms and floods that may beat upon it. The other figure

is that of a tree, which, being rooted far down in the earth, and spread abroad under the ground, abides under all winds and hurricanes, and still prospers. And the union of these two figures fully expresses the meaning of St. Paul—that of firm and fixed establishment in grace. The ground of rest and nourishment to the believer's soul is said to be *love*; for this is the ground of all religious principle, and it is that which feeds and nourishes it, even to eternal life. Establishment in religion is establishment in holy love. Maturity in grace is maturity and perfection in love. It is here that the believer's soul rests, and rests securely.

And, my brethren, there is such a state of Christian attainment as that of having our principles so deeply laid and firmly fixed that no trials and temptations shall unsettle or remove us. Paul had undoubtedly attained it when he exclaimed, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril,

or sword? Nay, in all these things we are *more* than conquerors, through him that loved us." And then he answers his own question more triumphantly, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The heart, then, can be established with grace; but even this glowing language of Paul does not warrant presumption. It does not encourage us to expect an establishment which will deliver us from watchfulness; it teaches no doctrine known by the term "final perseverance." The state of absolute certainty of continuance, and of absolute safety, belongs only to heaven; it is the ever-blessed privilege of the company of the just made perfect, who are around the everlasting throne, of the Church triumphant. The Church militant, even the most perfect Christian believers, are still in a state of pro-

bation. But yet there is such a sure and settled state of grace to be attained by these, that you may almost certainly predict it will remain. You seldom know an old and established Christian fall. There is the rooting of a tree, the adherence of the roots to the soil, so that their hold is firm and sure. There is the grounding and settlement of a building which, when compacted and fitly framed, rests with solidity and strength upon the deep foundation, so as to remove all fears of unsafety. Thus, there is the rooting and grounding of a Christian in love, so that he becomes steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Brethren, seek this full establishment in holy and divine affection. Do not be content to be unstable as water—to be always beginning your religion over again—always laying the foundation, and never having a superstructure of holiness. O, seek to be rooted and grounded in love, that you may feel you are really going on to perfection.

4. But establishment is not the limit of the apostle's prayer; it does not comprise his entire idea of spiritualizing the geometrical proportions of a building; he seeks for Christian believers *all-comprehending and experimental knowledge of the love of Christ*—"that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and hight; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

The temple is made strong by the almighty power of the Spirit—Christ dwells in it—the foundation is sure—and now he proceeds to its dimensions and extent. How his heart overflows, and his large and fertile mind toils to express what he feels is, after all, inexpressible, in merely mortal language, though raised by inspiration! St. Paul uses these geometrical terms—length, breadth, depth, and hight—to convey to us some sense of the immeasurableness and immensity of the love of Christ; but he does not attempt really to define the dimen-

sions of that love. Where could he begin to measure it? Where would he first place the measuring-line? Who can date the commencement of the love of Christ? He is "the Lamb slain," in the eternal purpose, "before the foundation of the world." And where shall Christ's love end? It shall reach on forever. What is its breadth? It extends to all mankind—as Paul exults to contemplate in this epistle; for Gentiles as well as Jews are fellow-heirs and partakers of the promises in Christ, by the Gospel. Its breadth, like its length, is unlimited. And what of its depth? It is deeper than the universe; for it was in existence before the outward universe was formed. And what of its height? It reaches to heaven; yea, to coheirship with him of his Father's kingdom. Measure the length of eternity—span the breadth and fathom the depth of the universe—yea, scale the height of heaven—and then, and not till then, say you can comprehend the immensity of Christ's love. His love sur-

passes all examples and instances of human affection, however strong, as the Scriptures declare. It is not love to a good man for whom some would even dare to die; but love for the sinful and depraved—pitying love for those who have no pity on themselves. Not love for a friend, such as Jonathan's love for David; but love for enemies. Not love passionate and human, expressing itself hastily in exaggerated forms, as in the case of the bereaved father, when he went weeping up into his chamber, exclaiming, "O, Absalom, my son, my son, would to God that I had died for thee!" It is divine, intelligent love, beyond all expression. It is love surpassing even that of the very strongest and most unsubduable human affection that we are acquainted with—the love of a mother for her own child—for a woman may forget her sucking child so that she shall have no longer compassion on the son of her womb; but says Christ, "I will not forget thee!" It is love passing all knowledge.

And yet St. Paul, the proficient scholar of Christ, prays that Christians may comprehend it. But how far? "With all saints." As far as any saints of God ever did, or ever shall comprehend it—as far as human faculties sanctified, possessed, and expanded by the Holy Spirit, possibly can know it. And, O, to know the love of Christ as Isaiah knew it, when he wrote the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy—to know it as Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus knew it at Bethany—to know it as John the beloved disciple knew it, when he leaned on the bosom of Jesus at the last supper—to know it as the apostles knew it, who witnessed his agony in Gethsemane and saw him expire on the cross—to know it as Paul, and James, and Peter knew it; as the holy martyrs knew it when they felt that the flames were to them as beds of roses; and as many eminent saints since their time have known it, whose souls glowed like seraphic fires with the intensity of Christ's love—how glorious this knowledge!

And if God be no respecter of persons, it may be as fully ours as theirs. Or, if the meaning of the apostle was, that the members of the Church might share and participate with all saints living upon the earth; if, in his large and all-comprehending sympathies, he prayed for all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, then the knowledge of the love of Christ, which he desired and sought for them, was great beyond what could be described, or even conceived. It "passeth knowledge." It is beyond what can be apprehended by the mere exercise of the understanding. It is experimental, and not mere theoretical knowledge. It is the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and which is inwardly felt beyond any thing that can be otherwise understood.

5. But we have still to contemplate the climax of Christian attainment; for the apostle prays, farther, that the Ephesian believers might be "*filled with all the fullness of God.*" This is beyond all that he had previously expressed,

and is what we should not have dared to speak of as a Christian privilege if we had not been taught it by inspiration. It is still the same idea of a Christian edifice, and most probably in allusion to the Temple at Jerusalem, in which God had dwelt, and which, at its dedication by Solomon, he so filled with his divine presence and glory "that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the glory which filled the house of God." So, with regard to the soul of the Christian believer, Paul had prayed that it might be powerfully strengthened by the Spirit, so as to be supported and upheld, like the strong walls of a building, amidst all trials and assaults. He had prayed that Christ might dwell within it, as God dwelt between the cherubim in the holy of holies. He had prayed that in its sanctified capacity it might comprehend with all saints the immensity of redeeming love, and know by inward experience what can not be learned by theory; for there is nothing like it, or equal to it, in heaven or on earth. And

now St. Paul prays that the temple thus raised, strengthened, possessed, and extended, may be filled with all the fullness of God! This is an amazing reach of thought and petition. It is, undoubtedly, the greatest of all the great sayings of the apostle; and it is plain that, in this instance, even his nervous language bends under the weight of the divine idea which he seeks to express.

To be strengthened with the Spirit's might in the inner man is much; to have Christ dwelling in the heart by faith is still more; to be rooted and grounded in love is valuably more; to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, is rapturously more; but to be filled with God is surpassingly more—and to be filled with the fullness, nay, *all* the fullness of God, is a thought that seems overwhelming, regarded as the possible privilege to be attained by an unworthy creature, such as man, born in sin, sha-

pen in iniquity, and whose breath is in his nostrils.

But *what does it mean?* It can not mean that the whole Godhead, in his essence and attributes, shall be comprised within human souls. That can never be, unless the smaller can comprehend the larger, and the creature circumscribe the Creator. We can not expect that God will fill us with all the fullness of his omnipotence, his omniscience, his infinity and eternity. We can not expect—I speak with awe—that the union of *our* human nature with the Divine, shall be like that of the adorable and perfect union of the Divine with the human nature in the person of our blessed Savior.

But *what does it mean?* How the divine Being can fill a human soul, so as to pervade it and irradiate it throughout, till the glory beams even through the believer's countenance, I think we may, in some measure, understand, from what we have personally witnessed in happy saints. There are evidently three distinct states

of man's salvation set forth in the Scriptures—inward renewal, or the new birth; inward purification, or being cleansed from all sin; and inward fullness, or being filled with all the fullness of God. Hence the command, "Be ye filled with the Spirit." Of John it was said, "He was filled with the Holy Ghost" from his birth. Of Stephen it is said, he was "full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost." Of the apostles it was said, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." And here, with no exaggeration of language, for it is inspired, we are taught that we may be filled with *all* the fullness of God. And have not some of the devoted servants of the Lord experienced this blessing since the days of the apostles? John Fletcher, for instance, who loved and served God with such intensity of affection and delight, said to his devoted wife, "I have experienced much of the life and power of God, but never yet all his fullness." Afterward he said, "It is come! and at length God has given me all the fullness that I asked for!" Good

John Howe testified the same, and said he was so filled with love and joy that he knew not how to live. And you may remember it is recorded that John Fletcher once said, "Lord, stay thy hand, or the vessel will break"—he was so filled with the love of God. But he testifies again that the vessel can be enlarged and filled again—enlarged and filled again! And thus it will be eternally with the glorified in heaven. God can stretch our capacities "wider and yet wider still," and then, "with all that is in him, our souls forever fill."

O, how unspeakably great and glorious is this privilege of being filled with God! To be filled with him is to be filled with light; for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." To be filled with him is to be filled with love; for "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." To be filled with God is to be filled with consolation, peace, and joy; for God is the God of consolation and of peace, and the source of pure and eternal

enjoyment. It is, indeed, heaven upon earth, "joy unspeakable and full of glory." But we must cease to speak of this high privilege; for thought and speech both exhaust themselves in the feeble endeavor to conceive and to express the deep things of God.

II. *Let us proceed to survey the ground of certainty upon which we may firmly rest our reliance for the fulfillment of even this our most enlarged petition; namely, the all-sufficiency of God; for, says the apostle, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly all we can ask or think, according to the power which worketh in us."*

St. Paul knew well the opposition that would be raised by unbelief against the attainment of this high state of grace and salvation; and that the arch-tempter would be ready to strengthen the doubts of a weak believer, and suggest that such great and unspeakable blessings as the apostle prayed for were beyond what God could or would bestow upon his human creatures. St.

Paul, therefore, meets this suggestion by declaring that God could give abundantly more than he had expressed, or even thought of. That this was the intention of the inspired apostle may be seen in other parts of his writings when setting forth high spiritual attainments. As, for instance, in connection with his prayer for the Thessalonians, that they might be sanctified wholly, throughout body, soul, and spirit, and preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ—he adds, immediately, as if he would silence all doubt and unbelief, “Faithful is he who hath called you, who also *will* do it.” And so here, he adds, in order to give an instant check to unbelief, “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.” Let us look at this truth; and as we have passed through the successive gradations of the apostle’s prayer, let us, as far as our time will allow, thoughtfully proceed with him, step by step, in treading the ascent of this high and sure reliance upon God for what he seeks.

1. The apostle declares that God is able to do *all* that we *ask* from him. And what can we ask? We can ask for all the apostle here prays for. We can take his prayer as an inspired form, and ask for the Spirit's might in our inner man, for the constant indwelling of Christ in our hearts, for being rooted and grounded in love, for being enabled to comprehend experimentally the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ; yea, we can pray to be filled with all the fullness of God. And then, when we have gone through these petitions, we may know that God can do all that we ask. But this is only one prayer, and there are other great and comprehensive prayers scattered throughout this book which we can make our own—prayers of Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and Elijah, and Daniel, and Paul, and Peter: there are prayers for pardon, and peace, and renewal, and consolation, and strength, and protection, and sanctification, and divine fullness, and heaven, and

eternal life. Can not we pray for these? He to whom we pray can do *all* that we ask.

2. God is able to do all that we *can think*. Thought is more subtle and refined than language. Thought is the spirit and language is the body; and thought will often pierce into depths and heights that can not be expressed. Consider, my brethren, what you *have* thought of, in your highest contemplations of Christ, and holiness, and love, and heaven, when you have desired, like the angels, to look into the mysteries of redemption, and have trembled before the mercy-seat in an ecstasy of love. How your quickened and exulting mind then glanced forward in its desires, and your very soul lay panting with ardent longings for more and deeper spirituality, even as the hart panteth for the water-brook! God can do all that you can think.

3. Yea, he can do *more* than you can either ask or think—yea, *abundantly* more—yea, *exceeding abundantly* more. What a combination

of language! And yet it is not merely the splendor of human rhetoric; it is inspired; and it means that there is an infinite fullness in God which surpasses our finite measures of thought or expression. God's power to bless us surpasses all the reach of vocal or even mental prayer. He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." How the stream of declaration on the all-sufficiency of God rises till it overflows!

4. But St. Paul shows us proof, and direct proof, of the truth of what he declares—even the proof of our own experience. "According to the power which worketh in us;" that is, according to the power that converted and saved us. For, since God has quickened us from the death of trespasses and sins, and made us new creatures in Christ Jesus—since he has enlightened us and strengthened us, preserved us amid all our temptations, and kept us as monuments of his grace and salvation, then we may firmly and joyfully believe in him for all the fullness

and perfection of his blessings. What more convincing proof do we need of God's power to bless us fully and to save us to the utmost, than the blessed fact that he has saved us thus far already?

If we needed more proof, I would refer you to the experience and declarations of others. Did not God exceed the prayers and thoughts of Abraham, when he promised that in Isaac the seed of Abraham should be blessed, and that that seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude? Did not the Lord exceed the prayers and thoughts of Jacob concerning his reception by Esau, and his recovery of Joseph? Yea, he said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see thy face, and God hath shewed me thy seed also." Did not the Lord exceed the prayers and thoughts of David when, after being hunted like a partridge on the mountains, God made him king over Israel, and exalted his name in the earth? So with Daniel, and Hezekiah, and others that we might name; so with Martin

Luther and the Reformation; so with our fathers in Methodism; and so with us; for God has often surpassed, in his bountifulness, all our thoughts. Then let us not doubt while we seek from him all fullness of spiritual blessings. Let us approach him in faith—remembering that he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; that he has already done much for us, and in Christ he will freely give us all things; yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

III. And now let us learn to ascribe the honor and praise of all the blessings we receive to Him who graciously bestows them upon us—“unto Him be glory, in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

It is evident that the apostle writes these words with deep and profound reverence. His confidence is strong, but it is not presumptuous or heady; it is full of that solemn awe which

becomes a human creature when speaking of the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity. “Unto *Him* that is able”—“unto *Him*” be glory in the Church. More expressive than if the writer had given the full name of the divine Being. Just as it is written, “Fear *Him*, who hath power to destroy both body and soul in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear *Him*.” “I know *Him* in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that *He* is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” So in the text, the suppression of the divine Name denotes profound awe and reverence in the mind of the writer.

“Unto Him *be glory* ;” that is, praise, honor, worship, adoration—the acknowledgment of all power and goodness—“in the Church ;” that is, by the assembly of Christian believers; for, every-where, an assembly of Christian believers, wherever it may be found, is a Church; and the Church universal comprises all the believing and saved family of God, whether of earth or

heaven. *The Church* comprises the saints of every name, of every nation, and of every region—the saints of heaven as well as the saints of earth. This is the body of Christ redeemed and saved for his glory.

“By Christ Jesus.” For he is the appointed medium of acceptable praise as well as of prayer. Through him all blessings descend, and by him all praise rises fragrant to heaven. “Throughout all ages;” that is, forever and ever: it is one of the apostle’s far-extending expressions that can hardly be literally rendered. “Throughout the eternities” it might be freely translated. It is an ascription of never-ending praise. And the man who has begun to offer praise to God in the Church on earth, has commenced an eternal theme. He has begun a song that shall never end; for when he ceases to sing on earth, he shall find his spirit attuned to the same song on a loftier key, and, with the Church triumphant above, his freed and disembodied spirit shall shout praise, and

glory, and riches, and blessing, and honor, and power, and dominion be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And who is there that is not now ready to add the solemn affirmation with which this grand ascription of praise concludes—"amen?" Let it be so—let glory be given to Him, in the Church, by Christ Jesus, and world without end!

My brethren of the Christian ministry, I presume not to address you this evening on subjects which relate immediately to your ministerial and official duties. These you know in their extent and details beyond any thing that I might be able to set forth. And there is not one of you at whose feet I would not gladly sit and learn. But occupying the place I do, and at your request, allow me to remind you—and more especially my younger brethren in the ministry—that what we more urgently need for faithfulness and usefulness in our work, is this high attainment in personal religion of which

I have been speaking to-night. This was the secret of the great and extended influence wielded by our fathers. This sustained them in their vast and arduous labors, in this large and then uncultivated country. This made them so effective in the wilderness, the cabin, the city, and the village. And it was this that gave them that weight and breadth of character which they so signally possessed, and which made them such mighty and successful instruments in converting and saving dying and yet immortal men. It was not human learning, though that is valuable; and some of them were, in the best sense, men of learning. It was not the arts of rhetoric and elocution, though in these they were great, and—at least some of them—superior to men of the ordinary and average standard. They were eminently men of God. They were “strong men”—to use your own phrase—and that in the best sense. Their hearts were the abodes of Christ. They were “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.”

And this alone can be our strength. This alone will enable us to discharge faithfully the trust committed to us. This will make you, my brethren, true followers of those great "pioneers" in this western world, and empower you to perform the work that God has given you to do. This alone will enable you to conserve, build up, and keep the Church of Christ, like true shepherds, and overseers, and laborers. Holiness—holiness—there is your qualification for the mighty work which the Lord has committed to you!

It is not a new Gospel that we need, as some would have us believe—not a "latter day" dispensation, such as some teach; but a higher style of Christianity—a Christian full and mature. And when this shall be the style of professors and of preachers—of people and ministers—then an influence shall be exerted that shall be felt throughout your wide continent till men marvel; and which shall shame and put to naught the mushroom delusions that, in this age

of comparative unfruitfulness, have so quickly sprung up in the world of religious profession. May He who is able to do exceeding abundantly more for us than we ask or think, save us eternally! Amen.

[Apr. 15, 1857.]

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